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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2007

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In Today's Papers

Investigation into Ankara Car Bomb Plot Continues

All papers report a 23-24-year-old suspect with curly hair and an Arabic accent is being sought in the investigation into the car bomb plot on Tuesday, averted when police defused hundreds of kilograms of explosives placed in a mini-van in a parking lot in downtown Ankara. Three cell phones were found inside the van, suggesting the plotters aimed to stage attacks at three different locations. Several papers claim the PKK was behind the attempt, with Cumhuriyet saying the terrorist organization wanted to retaliate against the killing of 11 of its members in Sirnak last month when the organization charged Turkish troops used chemical weapons in the operation. Police went on alert in Ankara, increasing security measures in the parking lots of public buildings, shopping malls and state agencies.

Turkish Paper Interviews Talabani, Barzani in Northern Iraq

Tabloid Aksam's Syrian columnist Husnu Mahalli interviews the Iraqi Kurdish leaders Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani in northern Iraq. President Talabani said with regard to the missing US-origin weapons in Iraq that the agency in charge of distribution of weapons in Iraq was managed by Americans, and that there were always irregularities. "Some 160,000 are said to be employed in this agency whereas the actual number of employees are recorded as 90,000 according to Iraqi Interior Ministry data. It means that an extra 70,000 are paid by the agency while they also sell guns elsewhere. The Americans know this," says Talabani. On Kirkuk, Talabani said the claim that about 500,000 Kurds had been settled in the oil-rich town was "exaggerated," but noted the Arabs settled by Saddam Hussein should return to their homes. The Iraqi President said the democracy in Turkey offers significant opportunities to Kurds who have their own parties and media outlets. "The new Turkish constitution will give broader rights to the Kurds. Waging war

against the AKP government and Turkish state means fighting against democracy and the rights of the Kurdish people in Turkey," he emphasized.

Talabani added he has told PM Erdogan that according to the requirements of the Iraqi Constitution, Iraq, once security is settled across the country, would see that foreign terror organizations are not allowed in Iraqi territories. "Unfortunately, we can't fight against the PKK and PJAK at this point," he said. Talabani noted that Kurdish leaders should understand that Kurds should contribute to the democratic process in Turkey. "I think Kurdish political leaders such as DTP leader Ahmet Turk have understood this fact. But maybe they don't have freedom of movement," Talabani said, stressing that the AKP's policies have given the Kurds in Turkey hope. Talabani also said after he became the President of Iraq, he paid visits to Syria and Iran, but was not invited by Turkey. "I'd be honored to comply with an invitation to visit Turkey if I receive one," Talabani said.

Massoud Barzani, the head of the regional Kurdish administration, said despite all the problems with Turkey, investment by Turkish companies in the region increased. Barzani said strains would benefit no side, and called for improvement of friendly ties with Turkey. On the PKK question, Barzani said the organization's members were settled in Mount Kandil and other mountainous areas along the border with Turkey whereas Kurdish soldiers were fighting for security in Baghdad. "We have told the PKK that we won't allow attacks on our neighbors. The PKK is a source of distress for us as well," he stressed. Barzani also noted he has received an invitation from Iran as the president of the Kurdish federal region, but not from Turkey and Syria. "I'm not planning to visit any country where I'm not invited as the president of the Kurdish federal region," he concluded.

Editorial Commentary on Iraq

Kubilay Celik writes in the nationalist Tercuman: "It seems, given

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the report by General Petraeus, US withdrawal from Iraq is not an imminent issue any longer. The General believes that things are working well in Iraq and an immediate pull out will have a negative impact on the achievements. On the other hand, Democrats are strongly pushing the administration for an immediate pull out. Even though the majority in the Washington administration is well aware of the impasse in Iraq, they are unable to say it publicly. In fact, the US is facing an enormous challenge in Iraq regardless of its decision on withdrawal. Things are going to be very difficult for the next president of the US. The new president will have to exert enormous efforts to correct the American image internationally and also should find a way to settle the Iraq issue -- both of which are extremely difficult."

Zafer Atay writes in the business-political daily Dunya: "General Petraeus claimed that all is well in Iraq and called for a gradual pull out. It can only be called a big lie to say that things are going well in Iraq when 600,000 - mostly civilians -- died during the last four years. While the General was giving his Congressional testimony, eight American soldiers were killed in Iraq, and there were numerous car bomb attacks. Ambassador Crocker's presentation was better and more realistic than that of General Petraeus. The experienced diplomat warned that a triumph in Iraq cannot be guaranteed. However he joined the General by expressing that things are going well in Iraq. In any case, there is a talk of pulling out 30,000 soldiers from Iraq. And this is another distortion. President Bush sent 30,000 additional troops to Iraq despite Congressional opposition. If and when they are pulled out, the essential core of US forces, which is more than 100,000 will still be in Iraq."

Turkish Anti-Terror Board Discusses Measures against Terrorism
All papers report Turkish High Council on Counter Terrorism, convening Wednesday under the chairmanship of Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Cicek, discussed the activities with regard to the fight against terrorism in light of information presented by security and intelligence units. A statement released at the end of the meeting says "Terrorist activities carried out against our country by the

terrorist organization sheltered in a neighboring country were discussed." The meeting also discussed the bomb-laden vehicle that police discovered in a crowded neighborhood in Ankara on September 11, say papers.

Draft Constitution

All papers: Mainstream Milliyet reports that 11 AKP deputies and 6 academicians will meet for three days, starting today, to go over the text of the constitution draft and finalize it. CNN Turk's website publicized the full content of the draft constitution that was prepared by the academicians led by Prof. Ergun Ozbudun. Answering questions of CNN Turk, Prof. Ozbudun said that after AKP's review, the draft will be publicized.

Papers also report that alternative draft constitutions are being prepared by the NGOs, vocational organizations and jurists under the leadership of Prof. Ibrahim Kaboglu. In a press conference to introduce their initiative, Prof. Kaboglu said that their work is open to contributions of democratic civic organizations and experts and that they named their group's effort the "Democratic Initiative for a Social, Cultural and Egalitarian and Contemporary Constitution." Mainstream Sabah says Ataturk's revolutions and the principles were taken out of the AKP's draft constitution and that clauses related to freedom of faith and religion will open the door to the re-establishment of different religious sects.

Northern Cyprus Site of President Gul's First Overseas Visit
Islamist oriented Yeni Safak and Zaman reported that President Gul will pay his first foreign visit to northern Cyprus on September 18-19, and then he will go to Strasbourg to address the Council of Europe on October 2-3.

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TV Highlights NTV

Domestic News

- Turkish Foreign Ministry Spokesman Levent Bilman slammed Greek Cypriot leader Papadopoulos for calling the Turkish armed forces as "the only enemy of the Greek Cypriots."
- EU Commission official Jean-Christophe Filori warned that changes in Turkish Penal Code Article 301 should not be handled within the frame of constitutional reforms.
- Turkish security forces killed four PKK terrorists in fighting near Kelekci village in the southeastern province of Siirt, Governor's Office said on Wednesday.
- Turkey's budget deficit for the first eight months of the year is reported as 8.4 billion Turkish Lira.

International News

- A powerful earthquake of 7.8 magnitude centered near the Indonesian island of Sumatra toppled buildings on Wednesday and set off a tsunami alert for the Indian Ocean.
- Turkish Cypriot presidential secretary Rasit Pertev met Wednesday EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn in Brussels, and asked the EU to press the Greek Cypriots to come to the negotiating table.
- Belgium is reportedly preparing to renew the trial of ten suspects from the Turkish extreme left terrorist organization DHKP-C.
- Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has stepped down after just one year in office.

WILSON